
A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
H O U S E of L O R D S,
IN THE

Abbey-Church of *Westminster*,

On MONDAY, MAY the 29th, 1758.

Die Martis Maij 30, 1758.

Ordered,

BY the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament assembled, that the Thanks of this House be, and they are, hereby given to the Lord Bishop of *St. Davids*, for the Sermon by him preached Yesterday, in the Abbey-Church, *Westminster*, and he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith printed and published.

ASHLEY COWPER,
Cler. Parliamentor.



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Preached before the

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H O U S E of L O R D S,

I N T H E

Abbey-Church, of *Westminster*,

On MONDAY, MAY the 29th, 1758.

Being the Anniversary of the Restoration
of King CHARLES II.

By *Ellis* ANTHONY, Lord Bishop of St. DAVIDS.

L O N D O N:

Printed by G. WOODFALL, at the *King's-Arms*,
Charing-Cross.

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SEERMON

Preached before the

HOUSE of LORDS

IN THE

Abbey-Church of Westminster



On Monday the 17th

Being the Anniversary of the Birth
of King Charles II.

By Anthony, Lord Bishop of Exeter.

LONDON:

Printed by C. Woodfall, at the King's Arms,
Charing-Cross.

ISAIAH Chap. I. Ver. 26.

And I will restore thy Judges as at the first, and thy Counsellors as at the Beginning; afterward thou shalt be called the City of Righteousness, the faithful City.

AT the Time when *Isaiah* prophesied, Luxury, Vice and idolatrous Worship, or Irreligion, prevailed so much amongst the *Jews*, that the Prophet was inspired to threaten them from God with very severe Punishments on account of those Sins. They should be invaded by foreign Enemies, and amidst the Confusions and Ravages of War, the State of their Government, sacred and civil, should be greatly disturbed, and even nearly subverted. Yet as God intended not wholly to destroy, but only to reduce them to a Sense and Practice of their Duty; he therefore graciously declared that when this Effect should be produced, he would fully restore their antient Polity and Government, and would do what on his Part should be fit, towards causing them to act for the future, as so great Benefits

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would justly oblige them. I will restore, says he, thy Judges as at the first, and thy Counsellors as at the Beginning, afterward thou shalt be called the City of Righteousness, the faithful City.

Some Persons have thought that these Words related only to that grievous Distress of the *Jewish* Affairs in the Reign of *Abaz* †, when *Jerusalem* was taken, and some of the Royal Family, as well as many other chief Persons in the State, were either put to Death or carried into Captivity. Other Men of Learning have been of Opinion, that the Words of my Text had a further View to that greater Destruction which *Jerusalem* was to suffer in the Reign of *Zedekiah*, and to the much longer Captivity in *Babylon*, that was to follow it. There are, indeed, Passages in the Holy Scripture so expressed as to have a Reference to more than one future Event ; and as *Isaiah*, from other Parts of this Prophecy, appears to have had that great Captivity and Restoration clearly in his View, he might, perhaps, intend to signify them here, as Things that would be of the greatest Importance, at once to humble and to comfort those *Jews* who would have a due Faith in the Promises of God, and would be disposed to act suitably to them. But whatever the primary Meaning of the Texts might be, they may naturally

† II Chron. xxviii.

naturally engage us to consider two Points of Moment, and very proper for this Solemnity.

First, what Influence God may be justly conceived to have in all the great Changes produced for the better in human Affairs ; and in the

Second Place, what Returns, a Nation benefited, as this hath been, by such Events, is obliged to make to God the principal Author of them.

That his Providence directs and governs, in some degree human Affairs, we may be assured, from considering the beautiful Frame and Order, the Harmony and Regularity preserved in all Parts of the visible World ; and still more decisively, by an abstracted Contemplation of those Powers and Perfections, which Reason discovers to be essential to the Deity. But as a Deduction of those Proofs would here be too long, I purpose to insist on another Kind of Proof, suggested by my Text : It shall be drawn from some particular Declarations and Works of God, relating chiefly to the *Jews*.

Among other wise Reasons, for which that Nation was by him chosen from the rest of Mankind, one was that it might be, in the Prophet's Expression, like *a Beacon or Ensign upon a Hill* †, a visible and continued Monument of his Providence in

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† Isaiah xxx. ver. 17.

their Affairs ; from observing which, the rest of Mankind might argue in Confirmation of the Dictates of their Reason, that he also interposed as far as was proper, though not so visibly, in the Affairs of other Nations. In the Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, at the giving of the Law upon Mount *Sinai*, on several Occasions while they travelled in the Wilderness, and in their Conquest of the promised Land, so many and very great Miracles were done, as plainly shewed that God was with them, that he influenced their Counsels, and went forth with their Armies. And Works of a like Kind, though not so frequent, were, on great Occasions, performed among them in after Ages. The Persons whom God employed for this Purpose, were, generally his Prophets, Men chiefly designed to instruct the People in the great Duties of Morality, and earnestly exhort them to a suitable Practice ; but who also were inspired to give out Predictions concerning divers important Events, which God at some Times thought fit to make known before they came to pass, as Proofs, both of his own wonderful Præscience, and of his Agency in human Affairs.

Many such Prophecies are recorded in the sacred Books ; but none more remarkable, on several accounts, than those that concerned the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, by the *Chaldeans*, and the Captivity of the *Jews* in *Babylon*. The Prophet

phet *Jeremiah* who expressly foretold these Events, with divers remarkable Circumstances of them, declared in the plainest Terms, that this Captivity would be for seventy Years, and no more † ; at the End of which the *Jews* should be restored to their own Country, and *Jerusalem* should be rebuilt ||.

There were not then any probable Grounds to expect that Event ; for the conquering Nation was not of a Character likely to have a particular Regard for the *Jewish* Captives, nor to be induced by their own Interest to restore them. Neither the Polity nor the Conduct of a People, who differed so much from the rest of the World, were liked by their Neighbours, or by their Conquerors : On which Account, when *Shalmanezzer*, King of *Assyria*, had subdued the ten Tribes of *Israel*, he carried them away Captives, and placed them in distant parts of his dominions, from whence they were never permitted to return, nor were heard of any more. An Example, that might justly have discouraged the *Jews* from thinking at all of their own Restoration. To know therefore, and foretell that it would come to pass, at such a precise Time, must have been the Effects of divine Inspiration.

This must especially have been true, as to one remarkable Particular, mentioned by *Isaiah* ; who,
seven-score

† Jerem. xxv. ver. 11.

|| Jerem. xxx. ver. 18.

seven-score Years, or rather more, before the Event, declared that *Cyrus*, then calling him by that Name, should be the Prince, by whose Order the *Jews* should be restored, and the Temple at *Jerusalem* should be rebuilt. When these Predictions were clearly fulfilled, as History assures us they punctually were, who must not have seen how justly *Isaiah* had before represented the God of *Israel*, as claiming to himself a Fore-knowledge and Power, to which none other Being could pretend. The Passages of his Prophecy relating to this Matter, are so truly sublime, and so fit to make Impressions on any good Heart, that I will give you them in the very Words of the Scripture. Chap. xlv. ver. 6. ‘ *Thus*
‘ *saith the Lord, the King of Israel and his Re-*
‘ *deemer, the Lord of Hosts ; I am the first, and I*
‘ *am the last, and besides Me, there is no God :*
‘ ver. 24. *I am the Lord that maketh all Things,*
‘ *that stretcheth forth the Heavens alone, that*
‘ *spreadeth abroad the Earth by myself ;* ver. 26.
‘ *that confirmeth the Words of his Servant, and*
‘ *performeth the Council of his Messenger ; that*
‘ *saith to Jerusalem thou shalt be inhabited, and to*
‘ *the Cities of Judah, I will raise up the decayed*
‘ *Places thereof.* Ver. 27. *That saith to the Deep,*
‘ *be dry, and I will dry up thy Rivers ; that saith*
‘ *of CYRUS, he is my Shepherd, and shall perform*
‘ *all my Pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem thou*
‘ *shalt be built, and to the Temple, thy Foundations*
‘ *shall be laid.* Chap. xlv. 13. *I have raised him*
‘ *up*

‘ up in Righteousness, and I will direct all his Ways.
 ‘ He shall build my City and let go my Captives,
 ‘ not for Price, nor Reward, saith the Lord of
 ‘ Hosts.’

After these Prophecies, and their Completion, which is well known, there is no need to enlarge on any other Predictions of a like Kind ; not even on those in the Book of *Daniel*, on Occasion of which that Prophet observed with great Force and Truth, Chap. ii. ver. 21. ‘ that the blessed God
 ‘ changeth the Times and Seasons, removeth Kings,
 ‘ and setteth up Kings, giveth Wisdom to the wise,
 ‘ revealeth deep and secret Things, and while he
 ‘ knoweth what is in the Darkeness, Light dwelleth
 ‘ with him.’ These Words were spoken upon the Revelation, which *Daniel* had about the four Kingdoms that were to arise in direct Succession, and were to be followed by the Kingdom of *Christ*, of a different Nature, but a longer Duration than any of them ; for it *should not be destroyed, but should stand for ever* †. This was the Stone to be cut out of a Mountain, without the Hands of any Person ; it was the Kingdom that was to be raised, and extended in the World, without, and against all human Power. A Prophecy most plainly, and signally fulfilled in the wonderfully speedy Propagation of the Gospel of *Christ*, through all Parts of the World then known, agreeably to a Prediction

† Dan. ii. 44, 45.

tion made by our Lord himself, *John* xii. 32. that *when he should be lifted up from the Earth*, that is, should suffer Death on the Cross, *he would draw all Men unto him*. This could not possibly have been fulfilled when there were so many, and, in Appearance, so insurmountable Obstacles to it, unless God had exerted an Influence on the Hearts of Men, which, while it was consistent with their Liberty of Action, had great Effects in aiding and strengthening those good Dispositions to which it was applied. There is no Time for enlarging farther on this Point or others under this Head. The Observations already made, have proved sufficiently, from the Holy Scriptures, the Part that God takes in human Affairs.

Some Men, indeed, may say, or think, that in these modern Times the Agency of God is not so easy to be discovered in any Cases publick or private, as it is represented to have formerly been. Now if we suppose this Assertion to be in some Measure true, the Reason of this Difference may be, that as our Knowledge of God's Perfections hath been greatly improved by the Light of the Gospel, there is not so much need as there formerly was, that the Footsteps of his Providence should plainly appear. But still in some Cases of a recent Date, they may, by attentive and unprejudiced Minds, be sufficiently discerned.

One Instance of this Kind was the Restoration we now commemorate of the Polity, spiritual and temporal of this Realm about a Century ago. The State of Things in it, before that Time, was troubled, confused and gloomy to a great Degree, without any Appearance that they would soon, if ever, be settled, in a proper Way, by mere human Means. But as the Spirit of Almighty God, by moving upon the antient Chaos, produced from that dark and confused Mass of Things, Peace, Order, Light, and this beautiful Frame of the visible World, so there is Reason sufficient to believe that the same good Spirit wrought strongly, though gently, on the Hearts of this Nation, by allaying and composing their fierce Animosities towards each other, by lessening the Prejudices they had contracted against Persons and Things, by giving them just Views of their own true Interest, and that of the Public, and by disposing them readily to act for promoting both of them.

Indeed, this was a Case of Importance enough to be, if any thing of this Sort can be, worthy of the Interposition of God. For the Restoration of our antient Polity was, in Appearance, necessary to preserve the Safety, the Liberty, and the Happiness of this Kingdom; in which, if the Discords and mutual Oppositions about religious and civil Matters had long continued so violent as they were, there is

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Reason to think they must have produced either arbitrary Power in some One at Home, or have subjected the Nation to the absolute Dominion of a neighbouring Crown, ever watchful to take all Advantages against us. Whereas, by the Recovery of the antient Constitution in Church and State, the publick Establishment was settled, as it was before, according to the Judgments, the Affections, and the Strength, of a great Majority of the Nation; a Circumstance at all Times desirable and necessary to produce the good Agreement, the chearful Submission, the Peace and Happiness of any People.

Some Persons, indeed, then had such a Design, on Behalf of the Crown, as if it had been carried into Execution, would, probably, have been very dangerous and hurtful both to the Crown and to the Nation. There were also many others, who, from an ill judging tho' well-meant Zeal, bore too hard upon those Protestants, that either from the Prejudices of Education, or other Causes, declined to conform to the national Church.

The Persons of the former Sort, in the great Warmth of what they called Loyalty, did not consider the Genius of this Nation, nor the Balance of it's Constitution. They thought that the Crown might easily be raised to the same Height of Power with the other unlimited Governments in *Europe*; and

and that taking this Course would be really for it's Service, and for that of the Public. But some wiser Men, who were at that Time in the Service of the Crown, and real Friends to it, as well as to their Country, were sensible that this Project, if it should be tried would hardly succeed ; and that if it did, it would occasion great Danger to the Crown itself as well as to the People : And therefore they thought that the real Interest and Greatness of our Kings would be to have all the Power requisite to maintain the Honour of the Crown and the Welfare of the Nation, against all foreign and domestic Enemies, and to afford Protection and Favour to deserving Subjects ; but not so much Power as Kings, when corrupted and ill-disposed, may sometimes misuse, to the public Unhappiness as well as their own. Accordingly those Patriots whose Memories ought to be greatly respected, advised and persuaded the moderate Measures that were then pursued. And if some great Stretches of the Regal Authority were afterwards attempted, the Foundations then laid were too strong to be much broken up or impaired. They lasted till another important Event took place upon them.

The Zeal of the other sort of Persons I mentioned, about Matters of Religion, was suffered, indeed to have its Course. Men did not, at that Time, sufficiently consider the Injustice, and ill Effects of putting Oppressions and Penalties upon others for worshipping God as their Consciences directed. Accord-

ingly, Severities not to be justified, were too much practised, till Danger, that threatened from the Popish Quarter, opened the Eyes of these zealous Churchmen, allayed their Animofities against those of the Separation, and disposed them to use their willing Assistance towards the great Change, which, when Things were come to Extremities that could not be longer borne without Ruin to the whole, was found to be necessary, and was happily effected, in the State of this Realm. Since which Event, as the civil Constitution hath been much improved, so a reasonable Freedom in Matters of Religion hath been allowed; and in Consequence of it, a Behaviour suited to the Characters of Christians and of Protestants, hath taken Place between most of the Members of the Church of *England*, and the Protestant Dissenters. From whence we may hope that the Grace of God which delights to enter where Charity dwells, will enlarge the Minds and dissolve the Prejudices of those who are in Error, and produce such an Union, or such a mutual Benevolence, at least, between us and them as ought to be desired for the Support of the Christian and the Protestant Cause. Now this pleasing Prospect leads us naturally to consider, in the

Second Place, what Returns are to be made to God, for the Benefits he hath graciously conferred upon us. And the first Return, certainly ought to be
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Thanksgiving, a devout Acknowledgement of his Mercy and Goodness exerted towards us, and at the same Time, a pious Contemplation of all his other adorable Perfections. But neither our outward Expressions of Thankfulness, nor even our Sentiments of Gratitude in the Heart, will, of themselves, be sufficient. God required more than both these from the *Jews*, when he said, that after their Restoration, *Jerusalem* should be called, by which he meant that she ought to become, *the City of Righteousness*, the *faithful City*. The first of these Titles imported the Practice of moral Virtue; the latter implied that a real and settled Faith in God, and Dependance upon him was the only Ground upon which moral Virtue could surely be built. These two Directions are not to be consider'd as peculiar to the *Jews*; they ought to be followed by all other Nations. Indeed, without personal and social Virtue, no Nation can long or well subsist. If Men should, in general, practise no Candour, Fidelity, or Honesty, toward each other; if singly, or combined for unjust Gain, they use all the Methods of Fraud and Extortion that are in their Power; if from Habits of speaking falsely, and taking the Name of God in vain, they have no Regard to the Oaths they swear by it; if none of the Principles or Motives of Religion should any longer have Weight in their Minds; what Safety could there be among People so disposed, for the Property, the Credit, or even

even for the Lives of Persons whose Hurt would be an Advantage to those that injure them ?

Some have professed to think that Luxury, Drunkenness, Diffoluteness, and other such Vices may benefit the Public ; because they contribute to increase the Trade and Revenues of it. But this is a narrow and wrong Way of Thinking. A Nation may be greatly weakened and hurt when by an expensive luxurious Consumption of foreign Products, the Ballance of Trade with Foreign Countries is turned much against it : Or even when Things of domestic Growth are used in a Way detrimental to the Healths and Lives of the Subjects, for which no Advantage to the public Revenue can be a Compensation. The Force of a Society depends chiefly on the Health, the Wealth, and the good Dispositions of it's Subjects. The first must be owing to a proper Regularity ; the second, to Frugality in their Way of Living ; and the last to their Considerations and Endeavours about moral Improvement. Virtue, in short, is the necessary Means to social Happiness.

But in order to maintain the Practice of Virtue upon such a Foot among a People, as that it may procure the Favour of God, there must also be a real and settled Belief of his Existence and Perfections ; a Trust in his Power, a Dependance on his Goodness, a Desire to please him. Moral Virtue, indeed,

indeed, may have some Times been found separate from these Dispositions towards God. It was so among several of the eminent Heathens. Their Ideas of Virtue were not derived from a View to God, nor did they dispose them to have proper Regards to him. They were mostly deduced from the Consideration of social Relations, Fitnesses and Ends. But Virtue on this Bottom only could never have sufficient Influence on the Bulk of Mankind; nor could those who had some degree of this Sort of Virtue, without any Faith, be approved by God. For Men were created, and are every Moment sustained by him, with a View to his own Glory resulting from their Happiness. On which Account in all that they do, or say, or think, they ought to have some Respect to him. If they act only, or chiefly on a View of Applause from Men; if when they give Alms, they cause a Trumpet to be sounded before them; or if when they relieve the Miseries of others they have only the Movements of Humanity and Pity, or other Inducements of a social Nature, none of these Actions will give them a Title to Approbation or Reward from God. They ought to love, and do Good to their Neighbours, with a View, and Love in the first Place, to God, and an earnest Desire to promote his Glory. These are the chief Duties that we ought to perform in humble Acknowledgment of the Goodness of God in restoring and still continuing to us our antient national Constitution.

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But one other Observation may be, at this Time, properly made. It is that we ought, as a Part of our Gratitude, to use our best Endeavours for still preserving this happy Constitution, and transmitting it to Posterity. The Mercy and Goodness of God have been shewn very plainly on divers Occasions to this Nation, in preventing or defeating the Attempts of our Enemies, against our religious and civil Liberties. And if our future Conduct be suited to the great Advantages we enjoy, and we have unfeigned Faith and Trust in God our Saviour, there may be some Ground for humbly hoping that if it agree with the Designs of his Providence in other Respects, he will graciously be pleased to continue them to us. But to this End, our Endeavours, in all fit Ways, ought to be employed. For the Providence of God mostly acts in Concurrence with second Causes. And therefore the Dispositions and Means that are usually necessary on our Parts, in order to Success, ought not to be wanting; especially in the Time of a dangerous War. Then public Spirit, Courage and Constancy ought to be exerted with peculiar Force. As the first of these Virtues requires us to prefer the public Interest of our Country to our private Advantage, it should therefore cause us to bear without Murmurs the Burthens or Losses that may, after all the Care that can possibly be taken, sit heavy upon us. These
cannot

cannot, in any Degree, be compared with the terrible Distresses of some other Countries, exhausted and ruined beyond any visible Resource. Should we ever be threatened with the Ravages of War, would any Hazard of our Fortunes, or even of our Lives be thought too much to guard against them? If then we can have Hopes of being safe upon easier Terms, let us chearfully bear those necessary Means of our Preservation, and at the same Time not be wanting to arm ourselves, as Prudence directs, with Power sufficient to repel the Attempts to which we may possibly be exposed. Let all of us, in our respective Stations, be ready to act with proper Composure and Firmness of Mind, that so we may be able effectually to perform what our Duty requires; and let us not be irresolute or unsteady in our Aims, but constantly persevere in the Support of Measures that are warranted by Justice, concerted with Prudence, and carried with Vigour into Execution : All which Circumstances in the Conduct of public Affairs, may, with Reason, be hoped from the Character of our Sovereign, whose Greatness of Mind and earnest Concern to do what is best for the Interest of his People, are known to all *Europe*, but most, by a happy Experience, to us. Where these great Virtues are at such a Height, the Measures they produce can hardly fail to be suitable to them : And therefore we ought to do all in our Power toward making them successful. I will end

this Discourse, with some Words of the Psalmist, which God of infinite Mercy grant, may justly be applied to us. *Psal. lxxxv. 9—13.* ‘*The Salvation of the Lord will be nigh them that fear him, that Glory may dwell in our Land.—Truth shall spring out of the Earth, and Righteousness shall look down from Heaven; yea the Lord shall give us that which is good, and our Land shall yield her Increase. Righteousness shall go before him, and he shall set us in the Way of his Steps.*’



F I N I S.

